

BV 660
.F6
Copy 1



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. BV660

No. F6

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE
PRIESTHOOD AND THE PEOPLE.

THE
PRIESTHOOD AND THE PEOPLE.

BY
FREDERICK J. FOXTON, A.B.,

AUTHOR OF "POPULAR CHRISTIANITY," ETC.

"Ich hab'es öfters rühmen hören,
Ein Komödiant könnt einen Pfarrer lehren—"

"Ja, wenn der Pfarrer ein Komödiant ist!"

GOETHE.

LONDON:
TRÜBNER AND CO., 60, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1862.

BY 660
. F6

THE LIBRARY
OF CONGRESS

WASHINGTON

PREFACE.

A PART of the following pages was written some years ago, and thrown aside, and a part also appeared in the "Freeman." This will explain the date of some of the allusions. The civil war that has broken out in the Church, excited by the publication of the "Essays and Reviews," and the absolute doctrinal anarchy that prevails, both within and without its pale, appear to me to give fresh pertinency and significance to the matters I have discussed. The diseases of the Ecclesiastical Body are evidently not merely inflammatory and transient, but permanent and chronic.

F. J. F.

Glyn-Gwy,
February 1862.

THE PRIESTHOOD AND THE PEOPLE.

"A PRIEST," said Jeremy Collier, "is the highest of human beings." He should rather have said, the highest of human beings is a Priest. Perhaps the simplest and most primitive idea of a Priest, is that of an aged man, who has seen and felt the reality of life, and has the faculty of imparting to others the true results of his *experience*. A young Priest, that is, a young Elder, is a solecism in language, and a contradiction in terms. A Priest is not merely the teacher of a systematic morality, but the interpreter of the mysteries of the inner life. True Priests are the spiritual flowerage and blossom of their age; the Poets, the Prophets, the Seers, and the Philosophers who reflect the culture, and expound the dominant ideas of their time, and by a more direct insight into the order of nature, material and moral, than is granted to the vulgar, are able to "prophesy" of things "that shall be hereafter." We may generally estimate the intellectual and spiritual character of an age or nation by the character of its Priests. In the lowest stages of barbarism the Priest is represented by the "Medicine-man" and the "Conjuror." In the infancy of science the office of the Priest (for Science also has its Priests) is usurped by the Astrologer and the Alchemist. In the dark and middle ages, the Priest assumed his natural place in the

van of civilization, as he was the sole depository of whatever science and learning the world then possessed, and was in some degree the expounder of its spiritual instincts. Priests were then, *in fact*, the "Elders of the people" in intelligence and culture. From the cells of monks came forth ideas, even yet imperfectly realized in physical science, and the "prophecies" of Roger Bacon, like those of his illustrious namesake in a later age, are still in the course of fulfilment in our laboratories and workshops. At the same time, the profound religious metaphysics of Abelard and Anselm, and a whole host of "subtle," "seraphic," and "angelic" doctors "amused the leisure of the learned, and fed the fanaticism of the vulgar."

The invention of printing, and the consequent diffusion of knowledge amongst the people, entirely changed the relations of clerisy and laity, or, more properly speaking, broke down the barrier that divided them. From the period of the Reformation to the present time, sacerdotalism in Europe (and more especially in England, the most vigorous member of the European Commonwealth) has been struggling for its life in the grasp of an intellectual democracy. The Priest is no longer either the spiritual or intellectual guide of adult Englishmen. Young ladies in watering-places, and old ones in Cathedral cities, may, indeed, still continue to amuse themselves by playing at Popery with the Puseyite clergy, but with the cultivated and intelligent portion of the upper and middle classes, and with the whole mass of the toiling millions below them, sacerdotalism has entirely lost its ancient significance. The moral life of the age is absolutely untouched, either by the doctrinal teaching, or maimed ceremonial of the Churches; and this is frankly acknowledged by the clergy themselves. The Bishop of Oxford honestly confessed, in his place in the House of Lords, that "*the people display an entire want of faith in the divine mission of the Church;*" that "*men believed that there was no presence of God with her; that there was no truth of God in her.*"* The Dean of Bristol tells us, amidst the rapturous

* See "Times" report, July 12, 1851.

cheers of his audience, "*that there is scarce a heresy that has ever entered into the Church except by the way of the clergy ;*" and he denounces the pretences even of the modern clergy as "*the substitution of the agency of man for the workings of the free spirit of God.*"*

A Quarterly Reviewer complains, that a City missionary with a *white neck-cloth, and in the garb of a clergyman*, can obtain no hearing among the "City Arabs," but that they gladly listen to the tidings of salvation when delivered over a black stock !† The picture of the Church, indeed, as painted by herself, is sufficiently melancholy, and the effect she has produced on the mind and morals of the people, after three centuries of reformed Christianity, is by no means encouraging. Mr. Clay, the late chaplain of the Preston gaol, tells us, that 40 per cent. of the prisoners had never heard of the name of the Saviour.‡ In their daily appeals to the laity for pecuniary aid, in the public papers, the clergy almost uniformly describe themselves as ministering amidst a mass of heathenism, and as being everywhere received by the poorer classes with derision, suspicion, and contempt; and they tell us that the Gospel according to Mr. Holyoake is fast superseding the Gospel of Christ. Others of the clergy are clamorous in proclaiming that the growing infidelity of the people is to be traced to the influence of "Penny Periodicals" and cheap literature, which, considering the admitted improvement in the moral tendency and scientific character of these writings, is virtually an admission that the faith of the people is in an inverse ratio to their culture and intelligence. With much still to be desired, it may be fearlessly asserted, that the press in England was never more moral than at the present time—never more free from the imputation of libel, obscenity, and irreligion. It is proved, moreover, by the statistics of the book trade, that the impure and unsound portion of our literature (in general translated from the French) is addressed rather

* See "Times" report, November 22, 1850.

† See Quarterly Review, No. 205.

‡ See Sir John Pakington's speech in the House of Commons, "Times" report, January, 1858.

to the middle and upper, than to the "proletaire" class; and that to the latter, "Wood's Algebra" has been found more attractive than the novels of Paul de Kock, the "Phalanstère" of Fourier, or the Communism of Louis Blanc.*

But I return to the picture of the Church as painted by herself. In the report of the eighteenth annual meeting of the "Pastoral Aid Society," May 10th, 1853, Mr. (now Dean) Close is reported to have said—"I, in common with many others of the clergy, have been persuaded, that under the most favourable circumstances the *great bulk* of our labouring population do not go to *any* place of worship. The question," he naïvely adds, "is how are we to get at them?" The Bishop of Landaff tells us that two miles from his "Palace" the town of Cardiff is "heathen," and he compares it unfavourably with "*Benares*"! Out of sixty families in one street, only five made even the profession of going to *any* place of worship. A most startling and significant fact is established by the census of 1851, viz., that in the three largest towns in the empire, the accommodation afforded by the churches immensely *exceeds* the wants of the people. It is stated in this report (page 87) that less than half the number that might have attended the ministrations of the churches, were actually present on the day of the census, viz., in the morning there were absent (in round numbers) *five millions*—in the evening, *seven millions*—afternoon, *seven millions*! The writer of the report (an orthodox dissenter, I believe) sums up by saying (page 89)—"It is tolerably certain that the *five millions* who every Sunday neglect religious ordinances, do so of their own free choice, and are *not* compelled by deficiency of sittings." And again (page 120), "Neglect like this, in spite of opportunities of worship, indicates the insufficiency of any mere addition to the number of *buildings*." The want of the people is a *credible doctrine*—they ask for "bread," and not for a "*stone*."

* See article on the "Literature of the Rail," in the "Times," since republished by Murray.

† The Rev. G. P. Saffery, a travelling orator of the Religious Tract Society, tells us that the "infidel press" circulates ten millions more Tracts than the Religious Tract Society, Christian Knowledge Society, and Bible Society united. (See speech at Preston, Lancashire, some few years ago.)

Such, then, is the position of the modern Priesthood in relation to the people, admitted by the Church herself. A portion of the upper classes, indeed, seem to give an otiose assent to sacerdotal pretensions, as an element of conservative policy ; but nearly the whole of the periodical press (which, with its many faults, assuredly represents the public sentiment) is arrayed against them. The great organs of opinion are the severest critics of our ecclesiastical system, ever "ready to wound," if still "afraid to strike;" and the "faint praise that damns" is all that can be extracted even from its political supporters. The state is no longer the "nursing mother" of the Church, and the government and people alike repudiate, with a smile of derision, the learned labours of her "Convocation." In fact, both the political and social influence of the clergy proper—(as distinguished from those who have acquired a position in literature, science, or philosophy)—has nearly disappeared from amongst us.

But if this be a true picture of the Church and its clergy, how comes it to pass, it may be asked, that they still retain even a feeble vitality in an age so utterly opposed to their pretensions? "When the life is out of a thing it must die," is an axiom in physics, and (metaphorically) in morals. As life is the essence of animal organizations, so truth is essentially the life of Religion. But we must remember that institutions that *once* had a true life in them, and a life-giving power, do not *die all at once*: and that the progress of decay conforms to a law as regular as that of growth. The Pope, the great Arch-Priest of Christendom, has, according to Carlyle, received notice to quit for three hundred years, and during that period has once been deposed and imprisoned by a "Corsican Lieutenant of Artillery," and once had to fly from his indignant subjects in the disguise of a lackey. He still, however, continues to exercise his motley sovereignty over the largest portion of the Christian world—the ignorant and superstitious being influenced by the prestige of his spiritual, and the timid and conservative doing homage to his political character. The fact is, that everywhere the ignorance and credulity of the people, and the spiritual pretensions of a Priesthood, act and react upon each other, as cause and effect. Priestly domination perpetuates the ignorance

and credulity of the people, and the popular ignorance perpetuates the influence of the Priesthood. Perhaps, as Lord Macaulay seemed to believe,* the rigid sacerdotalism of Rome has more life in it than the semi-sacerdotalism of the Protestant sects, as it has a deeper root in the spiritual realities of the past. In the middle ages, a barefooted monk stood between hostile armies, and *commanded* peace in the name of God. The modern clerical magistrate, backed by the civil power, is unable to separate a couple of pugilists! The fierce and turbulent Baron of the days of the Plantagenets stood uncovered in the presence of the mitred Abbot. The Protestant Bishop of the nineteenth century has to bend and cringe before the rising spirit of democracy.

It is impossible to doubt, when we carefully observe the spirit of the times, that the Anglican Priesthood, at least, has reached its culminating point, and is steadily on the decline. The evangelical clergy, in common with their dissenting brethren of all sects, are frankly, and even ostentatiously, protesting everywhere against the spirit of sacerdotalism. The English universities, and the Protestant university of Ireland, the great nurseries of the Anglican Priesthood, have been recently under the process of purification. Parliaments are devoting a larger portion of their time to enquiries into ecclesiastical abuses—the management of episcopal revenues—the jobbings of Deans and Chapters—the nepotism of Bishops, and the non-residence of the clergy. The Protestant Church and clergy stand related to the people much as the Catholic Church and clergy at the period of the Reformation. The State has undertaken to reform, and in doing so, will assuredly destroy them. The history of the world affords innumerable examples of the collision of the co-ordinate powers of Church and State, and in advanced stages of civilization the State is always triumphant. The power of Parliament, and the

* See Macaulay's Review of "Ranke's History of the Popes," for his dextrous and somewhat sophistical argument. He asks, *how is Catholicism to perish?* I answer, when a more *Catholic* doctrine is taught. Protestantism is actually less Catholic. The cure for Catholicism is Catholicity. Protestantism is Popery and water—Popery diluted with a vague religious Idealism. It is not so much a religion as an *Idea* imperfectly conceived.

force of public opinion, are sure to be too strong for the shadowy abstractions of religious metaphysics and monkish theology. A priesthood, however, so richly endowed as the Anglican may be expected to "die hard," and often when it appears to be dying, may only be changing the conditions of life; throwing overboard, from time to time, during the storm that is raging around it, some unpopular dogma, or Priestly pretension, for the security of the rest.

The anti-sacerdotal and semi-rationalistic zeal of the evangelical clergy may be fairly attributed to their hatred of their Puseyite antagonists. The illogical and short-sighted, or else dishonest and equivocating position assumed by these rose-water Reformers, is, however, utterly untenable. They are professedly ready to abandon a portion of the *authority* of their office; but they still continue to contend fiercely for the sacred form of investiture. "Episcopal ordination" is to them as "the apple of their eye;" but when once "ordained" and provided for, they freely adopt the doctrine and discipline of dissent. They continue to "consecrate the elements" in the mysterious language of antiquity, whilst they repudiate its grammatical meaning. On the platform, they openly brand as Papistical the offices they use in their Churches. They derive their popularity and their pew-rents from pandering to the spirit of dissent, and receive a supplementary revenue from the coffers of orthodoxy. They are like those married libertines who lavish their caresses on a fascinating mistress, whilst they live upon the fortune of an ugly and neglected wife. They are by no means so anxious to avoid the "idolatries" as they are to enjoy the "spoils of the Egyptians."

But if the modern "Minister" of religion is not honestly a "Priest," it may reasonably be asked, "*What* is he?" If he is not divinely appointed, and supernaturally endowed to mediate in Holy things between man and his Maker—if he is not the anointed custodian, and infallible expounder of some *external* revelation, how is he distinguished from the often better-instructed and more devout-minded laity amongst whom he ministers? What is he more, according to his own theory, after the "imposition of hands" than he was before? Has he, or has

he not, received the "gift of the Holy Ghost?" It has been truly said that this question involves either the most solemn mystery, or the most blasphemous absurdity. But the ordained evangelical priest does not profess to "heal the sick," "raise the dead," or "cast out devils"—to save the souls of men by a consecrated wafer, or by the "water of Baptism;" but yet he retains an undefined reverence for the doctrine of "Apostolical succession," and a loyal devotion to "Catholic Christianity"—meaning by these professions just so much as will permit him to coquet with Dissent, without altogether divorcing himself from his "awful, lawful" spouse the Church.

It cannot be supposed that double-dealing like this will long continue to deceive the intelligent, or to satisfy the sincere portion of the people. When the dust raised by the recent "battles of the Churches" shall have subsided, men will begin to see, with clearer eyes, into the true merits of a contest in which they have hitherto displayed more zeal than knowledge—more of the frenzy of party, than of the calm insight of religious philosophy. They will see in the evangelical protest against "Priesthood" a "delicate device" to secure under false pretences, and in a new form, that very spiritual "authority" against which it formally protests. The past history of Puritanism at home and abroad, will teach men that there is little difference in the practical effects on the spiritual freedom of mankind, between the doctrines of Geneva and of Rome. That the priestly tyranny of Laud may be even favourably contrasted with the treacherous and cold-blooded cruelty of Calvin—that they who erected May-poles in the villages of England, and filled our churches with pictures, may have been quite as tolerant as those who mutilated and destroyed them—that they who decked their altars with flowers, may have had as much reverence for sacred things as those who converted our Cathedrals into cavalry barracks. If we are to believe the representations of the "expelled Ministers," the meek "Wesleyan Conference" not long ago established, in the nineteenth century, an actual "Inquisition" in all but the "question" and the "thumb-screw."

The great issue to be tried in the present age, however, is

not one between Puseyite and Puritan—not even between the Popery of Lambeth and the Popery of the Vatican—but between the assumed *authority* of *all* human priesthoods and Churches, and the general conscience of mankind. The whole Christian world is on the eve of a contest, not merely of Churches, but of *principles*. The Reformation was the first hesitating and uncertain step on a path of which ages yet unborn will not see the end, upon which the world has been loitering, in doubt and hesitation, for three centuries, but upon which a strong and ever-brightening light is now being thrown by the steady growth of human intelligence. We live fast in the nineteenth century, and Gervinus, in his great historical work, is fully justified in taking the period included between the “Congress of Vienna” and the middle of the present century (“a space of time not longer than a single human life”) as sufficient to occupy the labours of a learned life.* Protestantism has been hitherto (to use the language of Parliament) an “organized opposition to Popery,” but not a “responsible government” for Christian men. It has been protesting and obstructive, rather than didactic and creative, and the world, somewhat weary of its protests, is beginning to require a declaration of its principles.

Without entering into any detailed discussion of the essential doctrinal principles of the Christian Faith, it is sufficiently manifest, that no Protestant sect has hitherto succeeded in giving it that *Catholic* character that was evidently intended by its Founder. Men may disagree about the cause of this, but of the fact there is no manner of doubt. The universality of Christian Ethics, and the applicability of Christian doctrine to all the conditions of human life, are, indeed, the boast of every pulpit; and so generally is this asserted by believers, that we may assume it as a consecrated dogma, that whatever is not “Catholic” is not Christian. And yet if we apply this simple test of orthodoxy to any Christian Church, its intolerance and exclusiveness are at once fatal to its pretensions. Modern Christi-

* See Gervinus’ “Introduction to the History of the Nineteenth Century,” Section I.

anity, so far from being Catholic, exults in its exclusiveness. It eschews the common and vulgar instincts of humanity, and offers the world a "body of doctrine" so subtle and refined, that bishops and councils are needed to expound it, and the very ecclesiastical lawyers turn from it in despair. The way to heaven, for the time being, often depends on the decision of the Bench of Bishops, or a judgment of the "Court of Arches." Old gentlemen in Doctors' Commons sit at brood upon our sacred mysteries, whilst the Christian public anxiously awaits the process of incubation. "The greatest wonder of the age" is *not* the hatching of chickens by steam, but the production of pure Christianity in the ungenial atmosphere of Doctors' Commons. We wait at the doors of the Court of Arches to know whether we are orthodox Christians or "pestilent heretics," and we accept a "revelation" filtered through the brains of ecclesiastical lawyers, and dependent on the dictum of Dr. Lushington!—The Divine oracles of Doctors' Commons, however, are as equivocal as the "voice of the Church;" and whilst baptismal regeneration is a "Catholic verity" at Exeter, it is the "devil's last lie" at Lambeth! The Bishop of Oxford anathematizes the doctrine of the Bishop of Hereford, and the Bishop of Exeter excommunicates the Archbishop of Canterbury!

But, after all the ingenuity of lawyers, and the sophistry of theologians, Protestantism continues as it was in the beginning, a mere system of negations and protests. Exeter Hall is in a state of permanent protest against the natural reason and common sense of mankind in general, and against Popery in particular; but when asked to enunciate its own "Catholic verities," it has none to offer us but the vaguest abstractions of monkish metaphysics, alien to the spirit of the age, and offensive or unintelligible to the mass of mankind. Daily and hourly are the real antagonisms in the religious mind of the age becoming more marked and more irreconcilable. Our *Oriental Revelation*, with its cloudy metaphysics, the growth of centuries of monkish meditation, becomes daily more opposed (as our culture is extended) to the positive and objective tendencies of the Teutonic mind. The descendants of the "sea kings," whose

earliest creed was the stern mythology of Scandinavia, have little real sympathy with the dreamy sentimentalism of Palestine or of Egypt. Our very civilization is fast passing from the Christian to the *human*, where alone can be found the basis of "Catholicity." Few laymen know anything of the "theology" they profess; fewer have ever read the "articles" of their creeds; and fewer still comprehend their meaning. Our professed religion, I repeat, is alien to our life.

The present crisis enables us to sound the philosophy and study the animus of the popular Protestantism. The convulsive efforts of Popery to recover its lost prestige amongst the nations of Europe, have stimulated the Protestant sects to a naked expression of their true instincts. The "tu-quoque" argument is banded about from Puseyite to Evangelical, and from Evangelical to Puseyite, whilst dissent raves distractedly, being unable to discover its proper vocation, suspended between its ancient profession of religious liberty, and its hereditary horror of the "scarlet abomination." The Puseyite very justly accuses the Evangelical of playing fast and loose with the doctrines and discipline of Dissent, and of surrendering those sacerdotal pretensions upon which alone a "visible Church" can be "established;" of coquetting with "Voluntaryism," and of "mutilating the Prayerbook." The Evangelical, with equal justice, accuses the Puseyite of making a "*distinction*" where there is no "*difference*" between "High Churchism" and Popery. Neither party have the penetration to discover (or, perhaps, the honesty to confess) that the real question at issue lies between the rights of conscience and the claims of ecclesiastical authority. To make the confusion of sects still worse confounded, it would be easy to show from the harangues of Protestant hustings, that beneath all the unction of the Conventicle there lies concealed a secret and subtle element of Rationalism which will probably assume, hereafter, a more distinct and palpable expression. The publication of the "Essays and Reviews" is a most significant fact.

Never, perhaps, in the history of this country, was religious anarchy more complete or more universal. The faith even of

Bishops and Archdeacons is trembling in the balance between Canterbury and Rome. The Bishops of Exeter and of Oxford have long been "halting between two opinions,"—"between God and Mammon"—illustrating the truth of the gospel saying as to the difficulty of the *rich* man entering the kingdom of heaven. Mr. Bennett, the rejected of St. Barnabas, remains suspended, like Mahomet's coffin, between two magnets—attracted towards Anglicanism by the vanity of successful schism, and towards Rome by beckoning visions of red stockings and a Cardinal's hat.

To estimate, however, the internal resources which the Anglican Church has to oppose to the hostile influences by which it is surrounded, let us consider the general character and conduct of its clergy, rural and urban, and its actual relations to the life and spirit of the age. We will first of all dismiss from the account, as confessedly either useless or dangerous to its interests, that very considerable portion of its twenty thousand clergy who are notoriously mere traders in its temporalities—the younger sons of noble or wealthy families, forced into orders to fill a family living, and eke out a scanty provision. To this class may be added, those of the middle classes, inspired by the same worldly spirit, who are drawn to the Church by the same objects that fill the Inns of Court, the Army, and the Hospitals—the investment of their time and money in a respectable and profitable "profession." No one will suppose that either of these sections of the Anglican clergy add anything to the spiritual strength of the establishment, or give it any real hold on the affections of the people.

We will now turn to those who are really performing, in town and country, the established and conventional duties of the Priesthood. Of the country clergy a considerable number unite in their persons the several characters of the Squire, the Magistrate, and the Priest, and, perhaps, are often better known on the Bench than in the pulpit—as preservers of game, than as Shepherds of souls. The old incumbents of smaller livings in secluded places (who in simpler times were the Doctor "Primroses" of the Church) are perhaps the most agreeable speci-

mens of the rural clergy. Their lives are, in general, simple and harmless, and if not distinguished by much spiritual insight, are often spent in active benevolence and conventional decorum. They are not, however, much in contact with the active life of their age, and their time is mainly spent in visiting their sick neighbours, and tagging together scraps of old sermons.

The country curate is commonly, at the outset of his career, a raw and inexperienced youth, transplanted from the corrupt atmosphere of our universities, (having taken his degrees in arts and in the vices,) fresh from the billiard tables and stables of those rich and luxurious establishments, without any previous education that can with any propriety be called religious, unless we are to consider such the attendance on a few "Divinity Lectures," being "crammed" with Greek Testament, "Tomlyn's Theology," and "Paley's Evidences," and attending the Matins and Vespers of his College Chapel—an indecent mockery of public worship. Spiritual experiences he has none; and, of course, a man can only to give to others out of the abundance of his own heart. By force of character, no doubt, many of the younger clergy rise far above the standard I am laying down; but this is by no means an unfavourable average of his class. If there be some grave and earnest, there are more utterly frivolous, worldly or indifferent. If we meet with the morbid and hectic Evangelical, who carries gloom and despondency into every household, there is also the rude and uncultured High-Churchman, who canters his cob (his cover hack, if he be a sportsman) to the cottage gate, throws his reins over the paling, and in a few bustling moments despatches the dying to their account with an "absolution" from the Prayerbook, and washes away the sins of the newborn in a cracked slopbasin! There is no doubt that within the last few years these "matters of routine" are managed with more decency than formerly—that the slop-basin is often exchanged for the pocket-communion cup, the gift of the maiden aunt or doting mother; but the ceremony itself, in all its falsehood and all its Papistry, remains the same.

But it will, no doubt, be said, that the true strength of the Church lies in the zeal and activity of its town clergy, in the

labours of the zealots of orthodoxy, and the zealots of Puritanism. But with the general suspicion that these men are far more anxious to exterminate each other than to preach the Gospel of Christ—to make partizans than to make Christians—it may reasonably be doubted, whether the Church does not suffer more by the scandal than she gains by the controversial zeal of the combatants. The public may be amused if not instructed by the clerical stump-oratory of the Stowells and Macneils, and by the melo-dramatic mummeries of St. Barnabas; and the popular preacher may obtain the kind and degree of popularity that is accorded to the popular actor. But even in this department of clerical success there is considerable alloy; for the same melo-drame that insures “crowded houses” in the aristocratic atmosphere of Belgravia, is hissed and hooted from the stage by the rude democracy of St. George’s in the East; whilst the star of the polished Macneil pales before the brighter light of the vulgar and unlettered Spurgeon.*

The follies and inconsistencies of the evangelical clergy are fast loosening their hold on the national sympathies. The Radical Dean of Bristol, as I have said before, openly denounces the whole idea of a “Priesthood;”* but the Very Reverend Reformer still continues mumbling Matins and Vespers in the Cathedral of Bristol; still continues, I believe, to eat the bread of the Church he is betraying. No doubt, the common-sense of mankind is equally revolted at the idea of a “spiritual” headship in Pope or Queen—at the idea of a “sacrificing” or “absolving” Priest; but in discussing these delicate subjects, your Evangelical liberal is careful to expose those corruptions only which tell against his Puseyite antagonists, and to conceal those that bear witness against himself. At the bed-side of the sick, the Evangelical Minister either reads the *unconditional Absolution* provided in the Office, or he violates a solemn obligation by neglecting it. At the font, he categorically pronounces the “regeneration” of the baptized, or he mutilates the office he has sworn to administer. There is not “rain enough

* See “Times” report of his speech, Nov. 23, 1850.

in the sweet heavens" to wash this stain from his conscience; there are no words in the vocabulary of sophistry and special-pleading to reconcile this paltry equivocation with the plainest principles of morality. If Reformed Protestantism is to rest on such a basis as this, it bids fair to become the most monstrous falsehood in modern history.

As to the Puseyite clergy, they seem to have forgotten at least one prohibition in their Prayerbooks, viz.: "*that a man shall not marry his Grandmother.*" Their devotion to their "mother Church," enthusiastic as it is, yields in intensity to their devotion to, what Mr. Roebuck calls, their "grandmother Church." They cannot recognize the voice of God in the world, unless it speaks to them in the language of the "Nicene Theology." All modern ideas of discipline, order, or ecclesiastical utility are submitted to the touchstone of "judicious Hooker." Thus does the "Past lie upon the Present, like the dead body of a giant." These "hidebound pedants" cannot move under the weight of "Catholic Antiquity," and have really no faith but in traditions and "hearsays." The monks of the Middle Ages, we are told, regarded all books on any subject but religion (as they understood religion), and even the Greek language itself, as the "invention of the devil." At the first dawn of learning, under Charlemagne, music was strictly confined to the chanting in the churches, and astronomy to the calculating of Easter! * Our modern monks would, if it were possible, restrict the astronomy of Newton, and the geology of Murchison, to the scientific revelations of Moses. They are eloquent in praise of the orthodoxy of Laud, and sigh, no doubt, for the revival of the Star Chamber. They would gladly reduce the free thought of the nineteenth century to the leading-strings of the seventeenth, when women were burnt for witches, and men's ears cropped for heresy. In 1664, Sir Matthew Hale, in delivering a judgment on the crime of witchcraft, gave the following reasons for his judgment. First, "*Because the Scriptures affirm it.*" Secondly, "*Because the wisdom of all nations, particularly our*

* See Schmidt's "Histoire des Allemands," tom. ii. page 126.

own, had provided laws against witchcraft." And Sir Thomas Brown, the author of "Vulgar Errors,"! gave a similar opinion. Such are amongst the ideal times of the Puseyite clergy—such the logic and learning that satisfy a clerical understanding. How can these men ever come really in contact with human life in the nineteenth century? A "loving looking back on the past" may, indeed, sometimes have its uses; but it is, after all, on the palpitating bosom of the present, that we must spend the pith and marrow of our lives.

The inconsistencies of the clergy, however, may be, after all, less fatal to their influence than their fanaticism; for when men become ridiculous, they are not far from being contemptible. A laugh is more fatal than logic to empirical pretensions. In the most literal sense, the "*turning of the tables*" has announced the discomfiture of Evangelical Christianity. The more respectable performers of the platform, the Stowells and Closes, the Cummings and Macneils, were naturally alarmed at the absurdities of the table-turning movement, and mildly rejected the revelations of Mr. Gillson's dining-table. They were evidently alarmed lest their craft should be endangered by the public ridicule. But we cannot, nevertheless, ignore the fact, that Tracts on Table-turning were circulated by *tens of thousands* amongst evangelical Christians. Evangelical crotchets are so abundant at the present time, that we labour under a positive "embarras des richesses" in selecting the most grotesque and the most amusing.* About the "personality of the Devil," there appears to be little doubt amongst either orthodox or evangelical Christians; and Dr. Vaughan of Harrow has written a book in defence of this great "Catholic verity," which is regarded as hardly less important than the Personality of the Holy Ghost. The devil is evidently rather a favourite than otherwise, in the evangelical theology. His Personality is everywhere admitted, and the only difficulty appears to be in assigning him his proper powers, attributes, and habits. At any rate, it

* Dr. Livingstone laughs at the South African "rain doctors;" but he forgets that we have some 20,000 "rain doctors" in England, paid by the State, and a form of words specially appointed for rain doctoring!

is satisfactory to know, on the respectable authority of Dean Close, that the devil has *not* got into the legs of our dining-tables. The Bible, we are told, does not speak positively on this awful subject; but in the words of Mr. (now Dean) Close, "*either keeps silence, or utters an indistinct sound.*" The Bath luminary, however, finds chapter and verse in the Bible to justify his belief in the "diabolic possession" of his furniture.* Let grave and thoughtful Englishmen who indolently accept the spiritual pretensions of their clergy, read Mr. Gillson's pamphlet, and Mr. Close's reply, remembering that the first is an M.A. of the University of Cambridge, the author of a "successful" book on the "Second Advent," and a popular preacher,—and that the last has been recently elevated to the Deanery of Carlisle!

Dr. Cumming has, we hear, settled the reign of the Saints, "positively for the last time," for the year 1864; but we do not perceive that the near approach of that awful event has sensibly affected the three per cents. One is naturally curious to know whether this ingenious and thriving Scotsman has arranged his affairs in conformity with the prophetic revelation, as no doubt the doctor has his investments to make, and his life to insure, like an ordinary Christian.

I think it is impossible not to discover in these miserable displays of folly and fanaticism the legitimate fruits of the professed faith of the Church. They who are taught to believe in the literal truth of the legends and miracles of the Old Testament, may consistently accept the Bath miracles, on the respectable testimony of Mr. Gillson, supported by that of prominent members of his congregation. Surely the testimony of living witnesses is better than vague oriental testimony to events four, or two thousand years ago. The Spirit in Mr. Gillson's dining-table delivered itself, indeed, in a dialect wondrously like the stock oratory of Exeter Hall; but we must not forget that we are taught to believe that the divine spirit once condescended to use for its manifestation the despised organs of an ass! The arrogance and presumption of the popular evangelical orator are absolutely astounding. Whilst proscribing the pride of intellect,

* See "Table-turning not Diabolic," by the Rev. F. Close, page 3.

and the vanity of philosophy, he discusses all things in heaven and earth with all the authority of inspiration. To him alone is the divine law of this mysterious universe revealed in all its details. He has "private and exclusive" intelligence of all the ordinances of God's Providence. The Past, the Present, and the Future are transparent to his deep insight and prophetic vision. He sits in judgment on nations and their rulers. No event in political or civil life is too large or too small for the all-seeing eye of the evangelical seer. Utterly ignorant, in general, of science, of philosophy, and history, he sneers at the researches of Humboldt, the learning of Gibbon, and the noble life-philosophy of Carlyle, whilst he ignores the metaphysics of Locke and of Kant. With his head muddled with "Gorham controversies," and "Denison cases"—the intellectual carrion of effete monkery—he has commonly all the narrowness of Puseyism, without its learning.

It appears to be a received doctrine in the Evangelical Church, that the most effectual means of cleansing our sewers, is by national humiliation and solemn fasting. Sour faces and salt fish have a peculiar efficacy in deodorizing a dunghill. The maxim "*aide-toi, et le ciel t'aidera*" is blasphemous atheism, and belongs to the French revolution. The true attitude of believers is the folding of the arms and waiting upon Providence. By such means has the noble Anglo-Saxon race ridden prosperously amongst the nations—founded its Indian empires—spread its colonies from the rising to the setting sun, and is now about to unite them by the electric wires of science. The Papist is ridiculed for exorcising by prayer the devil from the neophyte in baptism; but surely this is not more absurd than praying away the cholera, or exorcising a stink. We are living under the influence of natural laws, or we are not. We must either abandon our science, or amend our religion—there is really no alternative. We must accept the facts of natural science, or the prophecies of Dr. Cumming, and Moore's *Almanack*. We must either abandon our belief of the Old Testament legends, or logically accept the Popish miracles of "winking Madonnas," the liquefaction of St. Januarius' blood, and

the Protestant and orthodox revelations of Mr. Gillson's dining-table. But is it really any longer doubtful whether we accept the astronomy of Newton or Moses, or are to sacrifice the science of geology, or the literal interpretation of the book of Genesis? Let the age answer for itself.

If we regard the present condition of the *dissenting priesthood*, we shall find little to distinguish it in character and spirit from its "Evangelical" prototype. The modern orthodox dissenter is commonly a vulgar copy of a Low Church enthusiast. He is a keen satirist of our universities, whose honours he professed to despise; but, nevertheless, he purchases a Scotch or German degree, and blazons it on the walls in rivalry of his orthodox competitor. He ridicules as a "bauble" the mitre of a bishop, and walks the streets in a shovel hat! There is a natural tendency in religious sects to decline in earnestness and sincerity when they have outlived the pressure of persecution. The old Puritans had suffered great wrongs, and were inspired with a great idea, and suffering and insight are the true parents of heroism and of courage. They fought and suffered for liberty of conscience, and in such a cause the feeble become strong, the timid become brave, and the dull become eloquent. Hence, during the great Rebellion, the popular cause was successful, both in the senate and the field, and was supported by a powerful literature and an invincible army. It was this cause that converted "a bankrupt brewer of Huntingdon," who could not address the Parliament in intelligible English, into a soldier and a prophet, and at last into the most powerful monarch in Europe; and "an army of tapsters and discarded serving-men," into something more than a match for the chivalry of an ancient monarchy. The heroic loyalty of the Cavaliers was unable to resist "the lobster-tailed squadrons" of Cromwell, because the religious idea was mightier than the loyal, and because men really in earnest about their religion are always invincible. In a religious war, the most sincere is always triumphant—the advantages of numbers and discipline are neutralized by enthusiasm, and every skirmish is a Thermopylæ.

The progress of civilization has gradually removed the causes

of offence that produced the stern virtues of the Puritans, and we are now enjoying the fruits of the heroism and their triumph. We are apt to regard the modern Dissenter as, in some sense, the inheritor of the virtues of these heroic men, and to give him credit for preserving inviolate the sacred heritage of religious liberty which they bequeathed to him. But, alas! if we scan the genius, and observe the tactics of modern dissent, we find little of the old leaven of Puritanism but its vulgar hatred of refinement, its panic terror of Popery (now comparatively harmless), and its rigid doctrinal exclusiveness. Its virtues have all disappeared, and little remains of it but its bigotry, its fanaticism, and its intolerance—faults comparatively venial in the seventeenth century, and in the presence of a still powerful opposition, but utterly detestable in the tranquil atmosphere of the present time.

The modern Dissenter in his relations to the national Church is much in the position of Gil Blas, when he smelt from *outside* the walls of the Palace the savoury odours of the Archbishop's kitchen, and no doubt, like the hero of Le Sage, he will end (if he has the opportunity) in taking service in the Archiepiscopal scullery. His horror of Episcopacy is, indeed, professedly founded on its wealth, its political and social distinctions. He edits "Black Books" in which Episcopal revenues, doubled in amount, are blazoned in capitals and emphasised with marks of admiration; he hunts out, with the keenness of a hungry attorney, the exact amount of a fine on the renewal of a lease. He actually turns sick at the sight of the blazonry on a bishop's carriage, and pines away with envy at the sight of the liveries and legs of his footmen. He is perpetually proclaiming the sourness of the grapes he cannot reach, and ridiculing the distinctions for which his soul is sick. He wishes to know whether St. Paul was a temporal Baron—whether he drove to church at Ephesus in a Long-Acre carriage with a hammercloth—whether he had a town and country house,—a cab, a tiger, or a French cook?

From this constant ridicule of the pomps and vanities of ecclesiastical state, one would be prepared to expect that the

modern Dissenter would be distinguished by the old Puritan indifference to them. Now your modern Dissenter is certainly not proud of his poverty, of whatever else he may be proud, and he is as fond of a title of distinction as a German post-mistress.* His contempt for the English universities does not extend to the German and the Scotch, which decorate him with honorary degrees, and equip him with all the implements of a quack. He apes the very dress of the clergy he professes to despise. We often meet an "orthodox Dissenter" in the streets, "every inch" a bishop, from the hat to the shoe-buckle, and wanting nothing but the manners of a gentleman. When the English beggar has quite done with his clothes, they go, it is said, to the Irish beggar. One would hardly suppose that clergymen now-a-days would be anxious to clothe themselves in the cast-off rags of the Middle Ages, fairly worn out in the service of feudalism and Popery; and yet we have still honest gentlemen amongst us, within and without the Church, who are quite ready to become the martyrs of the Cope, the Alb, or the Dalmatic. The Protestant Dissenter enters fully into this retrograde spirit of the time, even when most loudly protesting against it, and is proud to deck himself in the faded finery of the apostate Church. The "expelled Wesleyan Ministers," who were not long ago starring it in the provinces, complain bitterly of the aristocratic habits and fashionable vices of the "Conference." This pious and thriving body, it seems, can "find no virtue in handicraftsmen," and is perpetually snubbing the inspired cobblers and gifted weavers who furnished the original bone and sinew of Wesleyan dissent. The meek Fathers of the Conference are accused of attempting to establish an Inquisition more tyrannous than that of Apostate Rome! One of these itinerant Reformers, in a speech delivered at Bath,†

* The Calvinism of Geneva, despite its democratic pretensions, was, according to Gervinus, essentially "*aristocratic in principle*," and it has always continued so. See "Introduction to the History of the Nineteenth Century," page 42.

† See Report in Bath paper, September 27, 1851.

complained of members of the Conference "*wearing white kid gloves,*" having "*ladies hanging on their arms;*" and, in short, of adopting the costume and manners of the most ordinary Christians. To be sure the stern denouncers of the Conference have little or no share in the good things with which their betters appear to be making so free, and have, perhaps, to contend with the poverty of Job, without his patience. They must be regarded as patriots in opposition; and it is just possible that patriotism may be "the last refuge of" a hypocrite, as well as of a "scoundrel."

There are assuredly different phases of modern Dissent, and the Independent, the Baptist, and the Unitarian have, perhaps, a little more earnestness than the sickly and emasculated Wesleyan. But the difference between the various bodies of Dissenters, as regards the true principles of toleration, is a difference of degree rather than of principle. All, except a few so-called Unitarian congregations, are disposed to put down opinion by force, to propagate truth by falsehood and clamour, and to submit questions of the profoundest philosophical significance to the arbitrament of a fanatical mob of their own raising.

These sleek and comfortable Christians, wearing soft clothing, living on the fat of the land, and free from all persecution, are using in their tirades against Popery the precise language of "Kettledrummy" and "Macbriar," who lifted up their voices on a hill side, amidst the braying of trumpets, and the din and smoke of the battle field! Comely gentlemen in glossy black coats and faultless neckcloths are hurling defiance at the last Anti-Christ discovered at Exeter Hall ("positively the last"), and heroically challenging the crown of Martyrdom, amidst the brandishing of smelling bottles and the waving of pocket-handkerchiefs. But it is easy to discover that, after all, it is a sham fight, and we may venture to hope that Dr. Cumming may be spared to his country, and Mr. Tresham Gregg escape the horrors of the stake. These respectable gentlemen will, no doubt, die quietly in their beds at a ripe old age, full of years and of honours, and bequeath a comfortable provision to their families. Their days will not be spent in holding forth in

barracks and battle-fields to godly troopers and steel-clad saints, but in preaching in well-aired chapels "to fashionable and distinguished audiences." In their days, babies will not be burnt in Smithfield, nor will the Papal troops effect a landing on the Kentish coast; Papal dragoons will not be mounted at the Horse Guards, nor the Inquisition established at Lambeth.

I confess that I see very little resemblance between the character and circumstances of the present time and those "earnest times" to which the Puritan orator is so fond of referring. In the days of Cromwell, men actually believed in the letter of their religion; they now, to say the most, only "believe that they believe," to use the language of Coleridge,—if even so much can be said of this easy-going and thriving generation. Modern Puritanism is everywhere found, in the "battle of the Churches," on the winning side. It is one of the most thriving and profitable adventures in which a man can invest his piety or his capital. It is eminently "respectable," and even at times somewhat aristocratic. It is patronized by Lords of the Bed-chamber, and smiled upon by Maids of Honour; Millionaire Bankers, and Chairmen of Railways, are subscribers to its charities, and speakers on its hustings. To bait the Bishops, and abuse the Puseyites, is one of the "fashionable amusements of the season" in our watering-places; and the Evangelical clergy of the Establishment are rapidly adopting the tactics, and joining the march of the Puritan army. In fact, it is pretty clear that Evangelical heterodoxy is on the point of falling into the arms of orthodox Dissent; and it behoves the sincere and honest portion of the English people to consider how they are likely to fare in the hands of this piebald spiritual dynasty. One thing alone prevents the consummation of this "holy alliance"—a difficulty in dividing the spoils of the national credulity. Dissent, though she assumes the modesty of a bride on the eve of her betrothal, is yet somewhat unromantically anxious about her "pin money" and her "dower." Her Evangelical bridegroom, though eager for her embraces, ungallantly reminds her of the lowness of her birth, and the splendour of his alliance, as an excuse for the smallness of the "settlement,"

and the shabbiness of the "*trousseau*." *If the English people have no desire to commit their spiritual concerns to a new despotism, compounded of the Rump of effete Puritanism, and the secret traitors of the Anglican Church, let them at once come forward and forbid the banns.*

I trust that in what I have written I shall not be supposed to involve in one common accusation the laity and clerisy of dissent. The last I believe to be generally timeserving, venal, and insincere;* the former contains within its ranks some of the sincerest of modern Reformers, and the noblest of modern philanthropists. I am aware that there are thousands of honest and upright men in the ranks of dissent, who are there simply because they have hitherto found no religious organization more advanced; and who are neither disposed to fall back upon the church, nor to sink into atheism.

A great spirit of revival, which would absorb these men in that true "Catholic Union" of which the world is so sadly in want, rejecting alike a living and a "paper Pope," establishing the reign of conscience, and the ministry of the intellect, is the one great want of this eventful time. Puritanism, once a reality, is a reality no longer. It was born of persecution, and nurtured amidst heroic conflict. It grew strong and healthy under a Spartan discipline. It had to struggle for its life in the "tented field." It had not only to "watch and pray," but to "*keep its powder dry*." It had to oppose the *prestige* of a powerful monarchy, the heroism of a chivalrous nobility, and the indifference of a godless age. The old Puritan was a man "approved by action and by suffering." He had to deal, not only with religious dogmas, but with the religious *life* of man. The modern dissenter is a "carpet knight," who defends on paper, or on the platform, the cause for which his forefathers bled upon the scaffold and on the field.

* Mr. Henry Rogers, a "Brummagem" Dissenter, is the hack defender of Whig orthodoxy in the *Edinburgh Review*. In 1850 he was employed to demolish my "*Popular Christianity*," which contained the precise doctrines of the "*Essays and Reviews*." In 1861 the *Edinburgh Review* is timidly and tentatively defending the very same doctrine.

But they, who have "suffered persecution" do not *always* "learn mercy;" and the bitterness of a religious contest too often survives both the cause that created, and the spirit that sustained it. Men still use, as conquerors, the language of the weak and the oppressed; and the war-cry, that was once the incentive to the resistance of tyranny, is continued as the apology for persecution. Thus the "slave is stung into the enslaver," and they who have won toleration for themselves, are the first to deny it to their vanquished adversaries. That the ministers of modern dissent are open to the charge of deserting the principles of their forefathers, is abundantly manifest from the persecuting spirit they commonly display. We have heard these men clamouring for the revival of those penal laws against Catholics, which a wise toleration has abandoned, and which were only extorted from their ancestors by the fears of a foreign invasion, and the probability of a disputed succession. The descendants of Cromwell, of Vane, and of Milton, after the lapse of two centuries, and in tranquil times, appear more terrified by the name of Popery than those illustrious men by the living reality. They have preserved the bigotry of the seventeenth century without its heroism. They combine the effeminacy of a refined, with the fanaticism of a dark age.

Do not imagine, then, oh English people! that you will gain anything by exchanging the priestcraft of the Church for the priestcraft of the Conventicle. The difference between the dissenting and orthodox priest is, simply, a difference of circumstances and costume. Their instincts, their principles, and their purposes are the same. Both are alike anxious to trade on your credulity, and to confine your spiritual growth within the limits of their dogmatic creeds. It is in vain that you break the bonds of Canterbury and Rome, if you fall into the toils of John Wesley or Jabez Bunting—that you protest against the Fathers of the Church, and prostrate yourselves before the Fathers of the Reformation. Luther foresaw, even through the mist of a monkish education, and the influences of a dark age, the danger of a "plurality of Popes" in the destruction of the unity of the Church. If the Reformation meant anything

(and crude and imperfect as it was, it had an idea for its basis), it asserted the absolute independence of the human soul, as the foundation of all individual responsibility. This principle is freely admitted *in words* by the Protestant Dissenter. "Events," says the "Protestant Dissenters' Almanack for 1850," "are running on to a blessed consummation. The crisis is at hand. Let us not be impatient. There is nothing hasty, nothing premature in the divine procedure. *National establishments are doomed.* Their days are numbered. Antichrist has been smitten with the lightning of heaven, &c., &c., &c. Then cometh the true era, and *the blessed conscience will be free.* Man will be lifted up and cleaved from the corruption of ages; then will rise up in the world a pure, spiritual, and independent Church, the type of the heavenly and the eternal." Noble words these, (very excellent "*pyet words*"), and would be profoundly significant, did we not know that they are used merely to round the periods of a popular address.

How can these men believe that "man will be lifted up," and the "conscience made free," when they all of them (excepting a few Unitarians) teach every Sabbath day from a thousand pulpits, that "*Man* is a worm, and *no man*," that he comes into the world accursed—is "unable of himself to help himself," and that all his merit is "in imputed righteousness;" in the belief of historical facts, supported by remote and obscure evidence, which he cannot and must not examine, and of monkish metaphysics which he cannot understand? How can a free conscience be tolerated by men to whom free thinking is a synonym for impiety, and a brand of infamy? Do we not know that the "pious" Wesleyan and the "liberal" Independent entertain as bitter a hatred of a Unitarian as of a Papist—that it is equally damnable to believe more, and to believe less than themselves? Who would suppose, in listening to dissenting tirades against Popery, that the very spirit of Popery—the *authority* of human creeds and confessions of faith, and the virtual denial of salvation to all who dissent from them—was as strong in the Wesleyan Conference as in a College of Cardinals?

If the soul of man is really approaching the era of its emancipation, and the light of a purer faith is about to dawn upon us, the preachers of the "new Reformation" will neither be found in the Church nor in the Conventicle. The soldiers of the new crusade (which is to rescue the divine wisdom of Christ from the hands of the true infidels) will be found amongst those whose courage and insight are, at present, exposing them to the pedantic criticism of the learned, and to the fanatical hatred of the vulgar believer. As in all past ages of revival, seers and prophets will arise amongst the *people*, having a true and living inspiration, and whose vocation it will be to protest against the "lying wonders" of ecclesiastical tradition, and the corruptions of priestly fanaticism and imposture. The tradition of more than two thousand years, by which the priesthood of India secured the victim of the "Suttee," and filled the coffers of the Church, has in this century been broken for the first time, and the light of reason and of nature admitted into the dark sanctuary of superstition. European priesthoods have been hitherto content with "Suttees" of the intellect, and the martyrdom of the reason and conscience of mankind. But their dominion is already shaken to its base. The temple of superstition is tottering to its fall, and when the time of its visitation shall arrive, not only papal tiaras and episcopal mitres, monks' cowls and Anglican surplices, but *Geneva cloaks*, and all the borrowed finery of dissent will be found amongst the ruins.

I have endeavoured thus far to examine the spiritual pretensions of the Anglican priesthood, and the genius of modern dissent, in their ordinary manifestations. An isolated section of modern priesthood remains to be considered—the section loosely described as the "broad" or "liberal" Church, comprising the Arnolds and Hares, the Whateleys and Maurices, Baden Powells and Rowland Williamses, the Hampdens and Froudes, and Kingsleys, and a motley multitude of speculative Reformers, and dashing brochurists, who, like Mr. Conybeare, are at once faithful sons of the Church, and sarcastic critics of its labours and its constitution. A few of the clergy are men of science; but when such is the case, their clerical are usually merged in the scientific

pretensions. Dr. Whewell is known by his "History of the Inductive Sciences," and his "Elements of Morality;" but not by his "Sermons." The disciples of his science are somewhat staggered by his theology.

The orthodoxy of the clergy in general, however, is in an inverse ratio to its culture, and the writings of the distinguished men I have mentioned above, are all, with the exception of the last, in the "Index Expurgatorius" of exact orthodoxy, and consequently have no very extended influence within the body of the Church herself, or amongst her ruling Elders.

I confess that I have little hope of any vital change in the constitution of the Church, or of a more Catholic Theology, from the labours either of the "broad" or the "liberal" Clergy. By the aid of unimpeachable logic they arrive, in general, at the most "lame and impotent conclusions." Dr. Whateley frankly confesses that the central idea of Christianity is that of a "religion without priests,"* but still continues to administer the rite of Episcopal ordination in its papistical form. Dr. Hampden exploded his learned battery against the patristic theology from his Professorial Chair at Oxford, but has been ever since charitably employed in his peaceful seclusion at Hereford, in endeavouring to heal the wounds that he inflicted. After teaching us that the "doctrines of the Church are merely matters of opinion," he allows no variety of opinion on the doctrines of the Church.

The recent most edifying controversy between Mr. Maurice and Mr. Mansel, the Bampton Lecturer at Oxford, as to the proper limits of religious thought, can only be appreciated by persons trained in the theological dialectics, and familiar with the various schemes of Christian theology which the fertile imagination of Germany has, during the last century, produced for the perplexity of believers. The laity in general, and probably nine-tenths of the clergy themselves, have neither the peculiar culture, nor the natural power of imagination to rise to the level of the metaphysical argument. The general impression produced

* See his "Kingdom of Christ."

by the writings of Mr. Maurice (exclusive of that felt by a few sentimentalists attracted by his amiability, his learning, and his *mysticism*) is well described by a writer in the "Westminster Review" as one of puzzle and disappointment—disappointment at a very partial scriptural exegesis, and puzzle at a most obscure solution of a theological problem by means of an arbitrary mystical metaphysic—sensuous Jewish conceptions metamorphosed into German abstractions, and ghosts of Hebrew metaphors pursued into the shadowy realms of the unconditioned. The writings of his adversary will, I believe, produce, at least, as much Pyrrhonism as Faith; and when men are taught that the highest attainments of the spiritualized intellect tend only to the confirmation of the dogmas of the Anglican Church, they will probably prefer the free exercise of their intellects, in their own way, to the trammels of a pedantic and mystical orthodoxy. To discuss the question "whether faith precedes insight, or insight precedes faith?" promises little for the settlement of any vital doctrine in the modern Church: for the same question, many centuries ago, "amused the learned leisure" of Abelard and Anselm.* In spite of all dogmatic warnings, the "limits of religious thought" will ever be so co-extensive with the limits of imagination. The contemplation of the Absolute, the Unconditioned, and the Infinite, excites *emotions*, but does not generate *ideas*; and in these shadowy regions of the imagination, the educated man will always be his own priest and his own philosopher; whilst the sensual and the ignorant will be alternately the victims of the fanatic and the empiric. In all countries, I believe, it will be found that the Priesthood and its adherents have one dogmatic belief and the people another. There is always, more or less, an esoteric and exoteric doctrine. A very few ideas, in reality, form the basis of creeds; but the ignorant vulgar rarely embrace any subjective belief, and are content to grovel in a material, historical, and traditional faith. The history of religion in India, says M.

* The question was, whether "*Fides præcedit intellectum*," or "*intellectus præcedit fidem*." See "Neander's Church History."

Cousin, is "un abrégé de l'histoire de la philosophie." The religious metaphysics of modern Christianity are poor and shallow, compared with the deeper insight of degraded India, in the dawn of her history. The Bhagvat Geeta (which Schlegel refers to a period anterior to all Grecian speculation) contains nearly all the elementary doctrines of Platonism and of Christianity, and of every version of each represented in the idealism of modern Germany. Every religion in the world has commenced in a mist of metaphysics, and ended in a mixture of superstition and materialism, the natural offspring of an *established* priesthood. The descent from a religion of philosophers to that of the people, is a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the spiritual to the sensual. "The Nirvâna (annihilation) taught by Buddha was transformed," says Max Müller, "into a paradise, by the human sympathies of his followers."* To establish the Catholicity of any dogmatic creed is the fondest of all delusions. The various creeds of mankind are but a vague approximation to their religious ideas, and these are rude or refined according to the civilization and culture of the age that produces them. No man can be said to believe the whole of his written creed; and though an endowed and established priesthood may stagnate and putrify on fixed ideas, the general tendency of humanity is indefinite growth. All creeds of men are but a "feeling after" the absolute under the conditions of limited and infinitely various faculties. One man's religion is born of fear, another's of gratitude or of love. One man seeks the Inscrutable in the deeps of metaphysics, whilst another traces the evidence of design and benevolence in the "revelations of the microscope."

Instead of wondering that men have invented a hundred creeds to solve the mysteries of their being, we should rather wonder that they have not invented infinitely more; and perhaps it may be assumed in reality, that there are just as many creeds as there are thinkers in the world. The *objective* and *subjective* tendencies of men's minds are reflected in their creeds. The

* See "Buddhism," p. 48.

God of Jeremy Bentham was a wise and just Magistrate; and his religion was "utility," and the production of human "happiness." The God of Schiller was the Ideal of Beauty, Truth, and Love. The souls of Law and of Behme were satisfied with feeding on the riches and tenderness of the affections, transfigured and glorified by transmission through a purified and pious imagination; whilst the African negro has his *Fetish* in a round stone, and the modern fanatic in "a printed book." With practical proof of the absolute *infinity*, we need not trouble ourselves about the orthodox "*limits* of religious thought." The great object of a religious Reformer should be, not so much to teach men how to think, but how to *live*.

"Grau theurer Freund, ist alle Theorie
Und grün des Leben's goldener Baum."—FAUST.

How small a surface of human life is really impressed by the learned labours of pedantic theologians, who for a thousand years have been employed in trimming the trembling balance of orthodoxy! The clever and genial author of "Friends in Council," says of a great statesman, that he would have avoided many political blunders if he had *ridden more in omnibuses*, and that an occasional ride in one, from Tyburn gate to the Bank and back, would have enlarged his sympathies with, and increased his knowledge of the national mind. The spirit of this remark applies equally to the learned "Pundits" of the Church. They, too, are studying the "blue-books" of dead generations, and overlooking the common life that surrounds them. Words may, sometimes, represent ideas in the vocabularies of religious metaphysicians; but it is more rarely the case with the pious laity; and it is by no means favourable to the interests of morality that men should assume a merit in intellectual orthodoxy, irrespective of its moral consequences. It is probable that Sir John Dean Paul, who frequently presided at Exeter Hall, was as far superior to the generality of London Bankers in religious knowledge, so called, as he was inferior to them in morality. History confirms what Philosophy might have taught us, that no form of dogmatic religion was ever able to check the

violence of human passion. In the dark and middle ages, men honestly believed the doctrines of the clergy as far as they were intelligible ; but this belief did not control their passions, or purify their minds. The dogmatic creeds of mankind are the *language* of faith without the *ideas*—the latter being infinite and unutterable.

Properly speaking, objects of faith can never be proper subjects of discussion. What a man believes, is removed out of the province of *doubt*, which is the foundation of all argument. "In faith," says Goëthe, "everything depends on the *fact of believing*—*what* we believe is quite secondary. Faith is a profound sense of security springing from confidence in the All-Powerful Inscrutable Being. The strength of this confidence is the main point. But *what* we think of this Being, depends on other faculties, or even on other circumstances, and is altogether indifferent. Faith is a holy vessel, into which every man may pour his feelings, his understanding, his imagination, as entirely as he can." With all this I entirely agree, excepting that I do not think it "indifferent" what a man thinks of his God—whether he regards Him as a "consuming fire," or Personified "love." The practical effects of different creeds are plain enough in the history of the world.

I would remind the learned controversialists who are now discussing the limits of religious thought, that most Englishmen, and especially religious Englishmen, have a natural horror of metaphysics. This is, indeed, not a very philosophical, or very reasonable aversion ; for properly speaking, religion is based entirely on metaphysics, and regards the "evidence of things not seen." Poetry and religion are thus far, at least, the same—that both are founded on a belief in the metaphysical and the unseen.* But theologians should remember that a man is neither made a poet nor a saint by *instruction*. Religion and poetry alike, are natural graces of the soul, which may be indeed

* Most of us must have felt the beauty and truth of Tennyson's lines in the "In Memoriam"—

"We have but Faith, we cannot *know*,
 "For knowledge is of things we see," &c., &c.

cultivated and developed by use, but cannot be created by theology or education. The dogmas of religion are simply the opinions of those who propound them, and are accepted by others with all the qualifications suggested by the individual judgment. These abstract dogmas of religion have oftener been the arguments for persecution than a means of spiritual instruction. It cannot be pretended that these learned subtleties ever have reached, or ever will reach, the common heart of mankind, or that popular ethics have ever been based on the metaphysics of the schools.

I repeat that I have little hope of any important religious reformation from the labours of the "broad" Church, or even from those of the so-called "Liberal" clergy. All, in different ways, appear to be labouring rather to force their advanced opinions into the existing system of the Church, than to raise the Church to the level of their convictions. It is a poor service to the cause of truth to endeavour to "reconcile" the science of Moses with the science of Newton—to allegorise the legends of the Old Testament in the lecture room, and inculcate their literal meaning in the pulpit. No healing can come from this "paltering in a double sense" with the facts of history and the discoveries of science. They alone are the true Priesthood of any age, who have the intelligence to apprehend, and the courage to declare the whole truth attained in their generation, and who really influence its mental and moral culture. This function is now being performed, however imperfectly, by a *free press*, and the assumptions of the modern Priesthood are, at once, an anachronism and an usurpation.

I have attempted, in what I have written, to review the various fields of clerical activity, and to show that the labours of the modern Priesthood are alien to the spirit of the times, and unacceptable alike to the educated and uneducated sympathies of the people at large. I assert, emphatically, that the modern Priest has ceased to be the real instructor of the people, that his flock is actually flying from him, and that he has to pursue it into the lecture room, and even into the streets.* A mere glance

* The Bishop of London has recently been preaching in the *streets*,

at the historical development of the Christian Priesthood will show the insecure foundation on which it rests. The modern *Priest* is the creature of the *Aristotelian*, whilst the modern *schoolmaster* is the offspring of the *Baconian* philosophy; so that a perpetual antagonism exists, and must continue to exist, between the intellectual culture and religious faith of the people. The more men *know* of the *facts*, material or moral, of the universe, the less will be their faith in the empirical teaching of the Church. It is a true presentiment of coming events that inspires the fears of a writer like Isaac Taylor,* lest the progress of physical science should destroy the objective forms of a religion founded on miracles, prophecy, and scholastic theology. When men have once learnt from the inductive philosophy to observe, and to interrogate nature for themselves, and to interpret natural laws, material and mental, the creeds of the Churches will become incredible to them, and their teachers ridiculous. The Baconian philosophy, once diffused, and carried to its legitimate issues, will destroy, at least, the physical supernaturalism of the Churches; though it will by no means diminish the "transcendent wonder" (which is the source of all religion), the "reverence and godly fear" of mankind for the unseen and inscrutable cause of all things. The great innovators in science, and apostles of knowledge (in all ages the victims of the Priesthood), have not been distinguished for their irreverence. Des Cartes and Bacon, Kepler and Galileo,† Newton and Spinoza, and all the great lights of the bygone ages, were as devout as they were profound in their intellectual conceptions of nature and of God: though it is probable that they had little real reverence for the objective forms of the popular religion. We need not fear that the religious instincts of mankind will ever perish from the increase of knowledge. All that science will do for them, will be to make them more intelligent, more enlarged, and more tolerant.

During the dark ages Aristotelian science and Aristotelian

* See his "Restoration of Belief."

† Galileo's penance for his discovery, was to say the seven penitential psalms at the foot of an ignorant monk!

theology grew side by side, and the same empiricism that produced a search after the philosopher's stone, and the idea of the transmutation of metals, &c., produced the scholastic theology. Soon after the revival of learning, the Baconian philosophy superseded the Aristotelian in the department of science; but theology still remained on its old Aristotelian foundation. How intimately the quackeries of science were connected with the quackeries of priesthood is proved by the clearest historical evidence. Henry the Sixth, the weakest of English monarchs, actually issued four decrees in 1423, summoning all nobles, professors, doctors, and *clergymen* to devote themselves to alchemy, and the transmutation of metals. "The *clergy*," said the king, "should engage in the search for the philosopher's stone; *for* since they could change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, they must, by the help of God, be able to transmute the baser metals into gold!"* This royal reasoning would, now-a-days, perhaps, hardly convince the most zealous of our Puseyite clergy—the Reverend Bryan King, or the Bishop of Brechin; though the latter (in the year of grace 1860) was called upon to answer for the heresy of sacramental "transmutation." I presume, however, that this learned churchman has abandoned the search for the philosopher's stone. These men are the true descendants of those who believed in "judicial astrology," in chiromancy, and in the cabala, and who cured diseases by holy water, amulets, and relics. The "ars disputandi" of the Church was a perpetual obstacle to the progress of the intellect; and the foregone conclusions of the Priesthood were a dead weight on human intelligence. "How," it was asked, "could the earth be round, when it is said in the Psalms, 'that the heavens were stretched out like a garment?'"† In short, it is not too much

* See Liebig's "Familiar Letters," p. 49. Spinoza, the "Gottgetrunkener mann" of the pious Novalis, is still regarded as an *Atheist* by the modern clergy, and the discoveries of Dr. Buckland were equally atheistical to them.

† I commend the following questions, once popular in the Church, to the attention of the Puseyite clergy: "Whether the angels spoke

to say, that during the prevalence of Church logic and Aristotelian philosophy, the avenues of every science were blockaded by the Bible; nor is there any doubt, that every honest and consistent Priest in the modern Church is as anxious as his mediæval prototype to limit the teaching of science to the letter of Scripture. The intimate connection of clerical and scientific ignorance, and their connected fortunes, is proved by the singular fact mentioned by Liebig, viz., that a few years after Luther burnt the Papal Bull at Wittenberg, Paracelsus, at Basle, committed to the flames the works of Galen and Avicenna !* It was Paracelsus who established the true medical doctrines of salvation by opium, and justification by mercury!

Whilst I thus criticise the pretensions of modern Priesthood, I shall, no doubt, be reminded of the vast and increasing religious organization and clerical activity by which the age is said to be distinguished—of our abounding charities and missionary zeal. But I utterly deny that the clergy, as such, are the principal or primary agents in these philanthropic movements. They are the signs, not so much of the extension of the popular religious faith, as of the progress of an enlarged, if not, very enlightened *humanity*. Men of all religions, and of no religion, take part in these works of charity and of mercy. Laymen are in general the real apostles of the new movement. It is they who have founded our ragged schools, our city missions, and our Reformatories. A fashionable novelist (like Mr. Charles Dickens), by painting with a master-hand the ignorance and heathenism, the degradation and suffering of the poor, is the true author of such works as these, to which the clergy, at last, gave their lag-gard and reluctant assent. Lord Shaftesbury is our real Archbishop of Canterbury; and has more to do with the so-called religious movements of the age than the whole bench of bishops.

Greek or Hebrew?" "Whether it is lawful for a man to swallow his own spittle during a fast?" "Whether animal or vegetable oil are indifferent on a like occasion?" "Whether there existed in Paradise before the fall, the usual excrements of the human body?" Such questions as these might be multiplied by hundreds.

* Liebig's "Familiar Letters," p. 81, 82.

It is he who preaches "justification by faith" to battalions of shoeblacks, and the "beauty of holiness" to repentant ticket-of-leave men, whilst the clergy proper are squabbling about the "apostolical succession" and the "limits of religious thought." The clergy, in fact, are everywhere found following timidly, rather than leading boldly the really religious movements of the age. Even in the recent religious "revivals," as they are called, a Quarterly Reviewer notices "the extensive employment of the lay element in prayer meetings;"* and if this spiritual Celtic fever has also its ludicrous and contemptible symptoms in the "public prayers and preachings of women and children," in the confusion of "hysterics" with "conversion," "in terrible scenes in which the eyes and ears were assailed by sights and sounds not to be described," young girls screaming and tearing their hair for hours at a time,—we may attribute the movement, with all its good and evil consequences, rather to the laity than to the clergy. When "a timid little girl of ten years of age is asked to relate her experiences to forty people," we may surely suppose that the time has arrived when "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings strength" is ordained, and that Ireland is about to become really the "Isle of Saints." The Bishop of Down, indeed, acknowledges and blesses "the great and holy work that is leavening his diocese,"† hysterics and all, and his clergy bear witness to its "moral" effects; but neither bishop nor clergy lay claim to the honour of having produced this Hibernian outpouring of the Spirit. The pious learned appear to be in doubt whether it is to be attributed to disease, the Devil, or the Holy Ghost (see the Discussions of Quarterly and Westminster Reviewers); the former being the most reasonable, and, therefore, the least acceptable hypothesis. The Protestant horror of *scarlet* is noticed by Dr. Hecker, as distinguishing the dancing maniacs of the fourteenth century as well as the "converted" Orangeman of the nineteenth; but the priests of the former period, instead of

* See "Quarterly Review," No. 213, p. 167.

† Id. *ibid.* p. 166.

blessing, were more generally employed in exorcising the spirit in the "converts."*

Such, then, is modern "Sacerdotalism" all over the world, and such its acknowledged antagonism to the spirit of the times. Sir David Brewster, indeed, fondly contrasting the "pious frauds" of the middle ages with the integrity of the modern clergy, tells us that "the modern minister of religion now asks no other reverence but that which is inspired by the sanctity of his office and the purity of his character:"† but surely he knows well enough that the Altar and the Font in the Christian Churches are still the theatres of superstition and imposture; that the remission of sins is effected by consecrated water, and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands. The action of the Priesthood in matters of science is at once destructive of all honest inquiry and all inductive progress.

But the people of all countries are beginning to require a creed that is in keeping with their actual intelligence, and in unison with their present culture. Neither the gospel of Popery, of Puseyism, nor of Protestantism, in any of its existing forms, is acceptable to the awakened intelligence of the educated classes, or to the down-trodden instincts of the masses. Religion supposes the free exercise of all the faculties of the mind and heart, the free culture of the intellect and the affections. The unbelief of which we hear so much, is not unbelief of the primary and essential principles of religion, but of the corrupt and incredible systems, that, whilst they profess to represent, entirely pervert them. The instinct of "reverence for what is above us"—so nobly expounded by Carlyle—of reverential awe in the

* See Hecker's "Epidemics of the Middle Ages," p. 82. "The Dancing Mania." "They (the dancing maniacs) were still more irritated at the sight of *red colours*, the influence of which on the disordered nerves might lead us to imagine an accordance between this spasmodic malady and the condition of *infuriated animals*." Probably the red stocking of a cardinal might produce similar convulsions, if suddenly exhibited to Mr. Spooner.

† See "Letters on Natural Magic," p. 57, chap. iv.

presence of invisible and Almighty power, is that upon which all religions are founded, and this is indestructible in the human heart. The unbelief of the age is unbelief in the moral anomalies and contradictions, the distorted history and perverted science of theological systems. Men are impatient of being told that they must believe literally in every legend of the Old Testament, whilst they are forbidden to believe in the modern miracles of the Church, established by abundant testimony, and received by the largest half of Christendom—that Oriental evidence 5000 years old, is more trustworthy than the evidence of living witnesses; that the Popish “Church” alone is capable of “pious fraud,” or pious credulity; and that the Popery of Protestantism alone is infallible and uncorrupted.

The people assuredly have little faith, and will have less as their education is extended, in such a “religion” as this. They do not believe, whatever they may profess, that God has given them a “revelation” as a perfect and infallible life-guidance, which wrangling priests can alone make dimly intelligible to them. They do not believe, and never will again believe, that the great spiritual law of man’s life depends for its interpretation on the acumen of ecclesiastical lawyers, or the decrees of ecclesiastical synods—whether they be held at “Nice,” at “Trent,” at “Westminster,” or at “Lambeth”—that the faith of a man’s soul is a “tradition” of the Church, and not a divine and “unspeakable gift”—the common heritage of all mankind. They do not believe that God is cruel, or unjust, or the author of disorder, in a world the essential idea of which is order. If unbelief in the “doctrines” of the Church, which it is itself unable to expound—if the rejection of the merely historical pretensions and traditions of a corrupt corporation, which sinks in the estimation of mankind with the progress of intelligence—if this be unbelief, the world is assuredly far gone in infidelity.

The recent appearance of the “Essays and Reviews,” which have openly assailed the very foundations of the popular Christianity by the mouths of its anointed teachers, is a fact significant of the spiritual tendencies of the age. A precisely similar move-

ment appears to be taking place on the continent of Europe, and efforts are being made to establish a freer and more expansive theology by M. Schérer, at Geneva; M. Colani, at Strasburg; M. Réville, at Rotterdam; M. Scolten, at Leyden; and M. Rénan, at Paris. Nay, Popery itself is in arms against the monstrous pretensions of Sacerdotalism. The Benedictines of Monte Casino, La Cava, and Subiaco, who rival, or perhaps excel in learning, the clergy of our English Universities, and far exceed them in piety and simplicity of life—the Capuchins who minister to the instincts of the poorer portion of the Catholic laity, as the Benedictines to those of the more educated and intellectual classes, are alike protesting against the arrogant assumptions of the priesthood. The mitred Abbot of Monte Cassino is an object of suspicion to Bourbon Churchmen, and Father Tosti, the most eminent monk of the order, has actually been driven into exile on account of the liberalism of his opinions. The Dominicans, who represent the purely theological developments of Popery, and whose labours are conspicuous in the “Sant’ Uffizio”—even these so-called orthodox priests are found protesting against the doctrine of Papal infallibility. They opposed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and quoted Thomas Aquinas against Pio Nono. It is a curious fact, that the same Dominican convent (that of San Marco, at Florence) which sheltered the illustrious Savonarola, whose memory is still revered by the monks, should still be the nursery of liberal opinion in the Church of Rome. In spite of their Catholic *sentiment*, we find Rosmini, and Gioberti, Lamennais, Lacordaire, and Montalembert, all more or less addressing themselves to the popular and democratic element in the Church.

Dr. Döllingen, in his lectures delivered at Munich, openly declares against the temporal power of the Pope, and this man is regarded as the most distinguished expounder of Catholic

* See “The Progress of Religious Thought, as illustrated in the Protestant Church of France, being Essays and Reviews bearing on the chief Religious Questions of the Day,” translated from the French by Dr. Beard.

theology, whilst his ecclesiastical history is a text-book in Catholic universities. In North America the same tendencies are everywhere observable in the Catholic Church.

If we contrast this young and vigorous literature with the dull and dreary fanaticism, the shallow hermeneutics and captious criticism of the orthodox priesthood, we can have but little doubt, in the present age, of the ultimate results of the contest. The quarrel between the advocates of what may be loosely called an intellectual and spiritual religion, is probably as old as the history of religion and philosophy, and, no doubt, had its origin in the diversities of human temperament. We shall, perhaps, learn at last that there is nothing "common or unclean" in sincere human thought—that man's true life is altogether divine—that his highest convictions are a revelation to him, even though they want the imprimatur of Priests. Looking at the conflicting religious opinions of earnest and devout men, it seems evident that the first step towards the establishment of any solid basis of human belief, is to ascertain the proper faculties to be used in the enquiry, and the limitations under which they must be exercised. The spiritual faculties, without the guidance of the intellect, are liable to fanaticism, and the unchastened intellect too often degenerates into impiety. Our second-rate men of science are often materialistic and irreverent, whilst our greatest discoverers have lifted the veil of nature with trembling hands. The highest and noblest exercise of the intellect involves the recognition of the spiritual faculties, and yet the intellect may be cultivated to a high degree, whilst utterly ignoring them. The French encyclopedists of the last century succeeded in throwing down the old idols by mere force of intellect, but their influence on religion proper was merely negative. As they left behind them no intelligible basis for human faith, we now find the old altars repaired, and the old superstitions revived. It is clear that a merely intellectual religion made no lasting impression on a nation which arrogates to itself the first place in European civilization. Those original elements of the human soul, Awe, Wonder, and Reverence, still remain to us,

after Philosophy and Philosophism have done their best and their worst to destroy them.

No existing form of Protestantism has yet acquired or deserved the character of a *Catholic* creed. None has yet ever had the courage to accept the legitimate conclusion that logically follows from its essential principle the right of private judgment. The very name of Protestantism, as it is said, is a negation. To find the true bases of human belief, we must return once more to nature and her "eternal verities" (on which all faiths of men were, at least, originally founded), and not to the garbled and second-hand reports of pedantic theologians. The soul of man in the nineteenth century is, at least, as capable of expounding its faith as it was in the first, the third, or sixteenth, if we had but equal sincerity, and equal courage. The true faith of mankind is, as Carlyle tells us, not what they profess, but what they *believe*, and this was never more difficult to discover than at the present time. That men do *not* believe, in general, what they dogmatically profess, is evident from the wild warfare of sects that is raging around us: for the very essence of a true faith is calmness and repose. Men do not contend furiously for self-evident verities, or for doctrines that are really Catholic.

The actually retrogressive tendencies of modern sacerdotalism, may be inferred from the fact, that 600 years ago, we find a Pope (Clement the Fourth) defending the liberal studies of Roger Bacon, the very basis of our experimental philosophy, against the ignorant bigotry of the clergy; whilst in the nineteenth century we have another Pope inaugurating the doctrine of the immaculate conception, and defending the miraculous liquefaction of St. Januarius' blood; and the Protestant monks of Oxford proscribing the geology of Buckland, the physiology of Combe, and the noble and really Catholic spiritualism of Carlyle. The publication of new truth, or, more strictly speaking, the revival of that which is eternal, has, in all ages, to encounter the same fortune, and to meet with the same opposition. The "people hear it gladly," but the "scribes and pharisees"—the sophists and the hypocrites, are always ready to blaspheme the doctrine, and to revile the teacher. Again and again we have "Christ

disputing with the doctors," and Socrates contending with the "sophists." The preacher of the "words of truth and soberness" is for ever regarded by the fanatic and the formalist as the "setter forth of strange Gods," and the inspired thinker as "possessed with a devil." The "crown of thorns" is, in some sense or other, the common lot of those who see beyond the outward shows of things into their spirit, and meaning—

"Die wenigen die Was davon erkannt,
Die thöricht genug ihr volles Herz nicht wahrten,
Dem Pöbel ihr Gefühl, ihr Schauen offenbarten,
Hat man von je gekreuzigt und verbrannt."—FAUST.

Christianity, as taught by its founder, and before it was expounded by "church literature" and embodied in a pedantic "theology," was essentially an appeal from "authority" to "Faith"—from "tradition" to "conscience." In the hands of Priests it has again fallen back into the original corruption, and enveloped in a cloud of supernaturalism, become once more a mystery of Priestcraft. Again, the "word of God," the great unwritten word, is "made of no effect by their *traditions*," and again in the nineteenth century, the language of Christ protesting against the "established religion" of his country, rises naturally to the lips of the reformer. Every discovery of any value to mankind has still to struggle for its life with the ignorance, the fanaticism, and the avarice of Priests. Dr. Jenner was once branded as Antichrist in the London pulpits, and the use of chloroform to mitigate the pains of childbirth is even now being denounced by the clergy as an impious interference with the primal curse!

The literature called forth by the present agitation in the Church, and by courtesy called "religious," is, I believe, the feeblest, the most motley, and the most unscrupulous ever produced by despairing fanaticism and discomfited orthodoxy. The flames of martyrdom have long been extinguished by the progress of civilization, and the actual "baptism of fire" is no longer possible; but the pen,

"That mighty instrument of little men,"

is still a powerful means of social martyrdom and pious per-

secution. In the pulpit, and on the platform, "the pious" orator is still able "to strike with his tongue most serpentlike;" to make the temple of God a place of refuge for the common stabber of reputations, and the Bible-meeting the sanctuary of the slanderer. Not content with the stereotyped expedient of appealing to "judicious Hooker," "our old English divines," and "Catholic antiquity" in their crusade against all new thought, and all advanced criticism in matters of faith; the Scribes and Pharisees of the modern Church endeavour to blacken the reputation for piety and learning of men immeasurably their betters in purity of life and intellectual culture. They remind me of certain fish, which when pursued by their enemies have the power of emitting from their *gall-bladder* a fetid discharge, which answers the double purpose of muddying the water and driving off their pursuers by its evil odour.

But the literature of Priests is, at least, as contemptible as it is unscrupulous. A glance at the advertising columns of the newspapers will enable us to form a tolerable estimate of the general character of our theological literature, dissenting and orthodox, and show us how little relation it bears to the actual life of Englishmen in the nineteenth century. Here we have one "learned Theban" discussing the personality of the Holy Ghost—another the Personality of the Devil, and a third the "*effects*" of infant baptism. The Rev. G. I. Faber advertises a book to show us that Napoleon the Third is the "seventh head of the beast" mentioned in the Revelations.* Dr. Cumming (whose writings are more advertised than Holloway's Ointment or Parr's Life Pills) has discovered, in the same mysterious volume, that "Rome will be destroyed by fire from heaven, *or* swallowed up by earthquakes, *or* overwhelmed with destruction by volcanoes, "as the visible punishment of the Almighty for its Popery." The Doctor (having apparently exhausted all telling topics *since* that event) has recently produced a book on "the World *before* the Flood."

* It appears, from Neander's Church History, vol. i. p. 137, that learned theologians have been arranging the seven heads of the Beast ever since the days of Nero, who was one of the first. I am glad to find that Louis Napoleon is "positively the last."

"Salvation, and the Way to procure it, price 6*d.*," by the Rev. A. M. Brown, LL.D., is the actual title of a sermon now lying before me, by a popular dissenting minister of Cheltenham. "Rheumatism Cured for a Shilling," and "Salvation Secured for Sixpence," jostle each other on the same page. "Ten Minutes' Advice on the Care of the Teeth," and "Five Minutes' Advice on the Care of the Soul," stare us in the face on the same wall. Is there any real difference in the animus of the rival empirics? Every wall is a-flutter with advertisements of clerical oratory, and every printshop alive with portraits of fashionable preachers. The very "windows speak." We see, side by side, in the same printshop, a figurante pirouetting in short petticoats, and a favourite preacher smirking in full canonicals; Power's Greek slave "in puris naturalibus," and Dr. Macneil in the attitude of prayer. Taglioni balancing herself on one toe, and Father Gavazzi "attitudinizing" in the costume of a Barnabite monk! All our religious activities reflect the sloppy character of our "pious" literature. It was once a vital question amongst contending fanatics whether Dr. Achilli was to be canonized as a saint, or execrated as a satyr. Religion has become a fashionable amusement in all watering-places, and the slip-slop of the drawing room is flavoured with the slip-slop of the Conventicle. "Serious" lieutenants in the navy, and pious cornets of dragoons, take the field against the Bishop of Exeter; and Sir Culling Eardley and Lord Shaftsbury are deeper in the Fathers than Dr. Pusey himself. The last new polka, and the last book on prophecy—Dumas' last novel, and Dr. Cumming's last lecture are equally attractive, and the same "fair saints," redolent of perfumes, and fluttering with finery, are found at the Bible meeting and in the ball-room.* In short, everybody but the *people* is busy in the cure of souls. The people alone have nothing to do with the popular religion.

In the 14th Number of the "Journal of Sacred Literature" are two articles, (one most elaborately written, and richly em-

* Poor Hood was quite right in saying that there are two kinds of piety in the world—piety proper, and *maggie*-ty.

bellished with Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac quotations) the first “on the words heard by Paul in Paradise,” and the other on Paul’s thorn in the flesh—matters, we are gravely assured, “of high and curious interest.” Nearly all the names illustrious in Church polemics are dragged into these “interesting” papers, which we presume are read by the writers themselves, and the little circle of pedants in which they revolve, and carefully eschewed by everybody else. The amount of piddling criticism, small second-hand learning, miserable word-juggling, and pompous pedantry collected together in these two papers (worthy of Mr. Henry Rogers himself), can only be conceived by those who have been able to keep themselves awake to the end of them. The speculations on the subject of “Paul’s thorn in the flesh” are too curious to be passed over without notice, and they lie conveniently for quotation at the commencement of the article (page 449).

“Not a few commentators,” says our learned Pundit, “have *puzzled themselves* about the thorn in the flesh, referred to by the Apostle Paul, as the messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. The difficulty has been to ascertain with certainty *what the Apostle means by it*, and it may be doubted whether this can be wholly overcome. It were tedious to enumerate all the opinions on the subject” (Heaven forbid)! “Tertullian thought it meant the *ear-ache* or *head-ache*, Jerome the *head-ache*: good Richard Baxter fancied it must have been the *stone*, by which malady he himself was affected. The most whimsical opinion I know, is that of Teller in his ‘*Worterbuch*’—‘*Eine figurliche Beschreibung der reissenden Gicht besonders Kopfgicht-migraine*,’ (a figurative description of racking *gout*, especially head-gout—migraine). Dr. Doddridge, adopting the opinion of Whitby, thinks that the view he (the Apostle) had of celestial glories affected the system of his *nerves*, in such a manner as to occasion some *paralytic* symptoms, and particularly stammering in his speech, and *perhaps* some ridiculous distortion in his countenance,” &c., &c., &c.

Now we will not presume peremptorily to decide (where so many doctors disagree) whether the Apostle had the *ear ache*,

the *toothache*, the *stone*, *paralysis*, or *gout*; but, considering the prevalence of the last-named complaint in some of our Cathedral cities amongst "the descendants of the Apostles," I would venture to suggest that *this* might possibly have been the complaint of the Apostle of the Gentiles. If Englishmen in the nineteenth century are not satisfied with this kind of religious literature, it must, I fear, be concluded that their minds have been corrupted by the audacious criticism and godless philosophy of Germany.

Such is the religious literature, and such are the religious activities amidst which the "Essays and Reviews" have fallen like a thunder-clap in a sultry atmosphere. [It was not to be expected that the announcement of a new religious philosophy, threatening the utter destruction of the effete traditional theology, would be received with a good grace by those whose craft it endangered. Coleridge, indeed, had from his Olympian heights shed a "dim religious light" on the decaying Churches, but from a want of consistency and sincerity of purpose, it had produced nothing but abortive Puseyism, and clumsy imitations of German romanticism. The "Essays and Reviews" seem, at least, to have some pretensions to clearness of purpose, and frankness of expression—an unusual phenomenon in clerical literature. There is something tragi-comic in the manner of their reception by the orthodox clergy; but I am afraid the irreverent laity are more inclined to laugh at, than to sympathise with the throes and agonies of Convocation, and the painful incubation of the Bench of Bishops. It seems clear that the obstetric aid of the old gentlemen in Doctors' Commons must again be invoked to assist the labour of Mother Church. The Convocation appears utterly confounded at the suddenness of the blow, and the direction from which it comes—from members of their own body. It is like a hen, which having produced a duckling, sees with terror and dismay its disnatured offspring plunging into a strange element, whilst she herself stands screaming and fluttering on the bank.

But I conclude, as I commenced, these pages by once more calling the attention of educated laymen to the actual position

of the Priesthood and the People. We do not sufficiently consider, in this nineteenth century, the total change that has taken place in their relations towards each other. The change has been so gradual, and the means by which it has been effected so various, that we find ourselves in a new era without any clear understanding of the path we have been travelling, or the goal at which we have arrived. The literature of the last three centuries has been steadily vindicating the right of private judgment; and though the Protestant Church has been feebly and hesitatingly protesting against the abuse of the principle, and the Romish Church against the principle itself, it has, nevertheless, firmly established itself in the minds of the educated laity. The doctrine of the "Oxford Tracts" as to the authority of the Priesthood, is really accepted only by a small part of the clergy themselves, and the signal failure of the Tractarian movement has exposed the desperate condition of orthodoxy at least. The fast and loose tactics, and semi-rationalistic concessions of the evangelical clergy, within and without the Church, are but a "tub thrown to the whale" that threatens to devour them. The time is not far distant when the clergy, dissenting and orthodox, must either become the reflectors of the highest culture of their age (the only real basis of their authority in all history), or sink into utter insignificance. A true Priest is one who has a clear insight into the spiritual character of his age, who is able by power of intellect, and the innate graces of his mind, to interpret, and by force of character to direct it, whilst the false one is content to pander to its credulity, and trade in its superstitions.

In every age of the world, its spiritual forces, that is, its highest thought, will be found, in the ultimate analysis, to have been the source of its virtual religious government. In the middle ages, when the monastery was the only asylum of learning, and the only laboratory of science, the monk was the natural and proper instructor of the people, for he alone had the "spiritual power" which is the true foundation of "authority." In modern times, our miscellaneous literature—the daily paper—the weekly, monthly, and quarterly magazine, have superseded the obsolete

and superannuated literature of the clergy. Does the really cultivated man seek for spiritual assistance from the clerical stripling fresh from our universities, whose knowledge of man's life is at best derived from a dead literature, and whose ideas of devotion have been acquired in a college chapel? Does he seek it from the sleek and pompous dignitary who is weekly gibbeted in the "Times" for his pluralities or his nepotism? Does he seek it from the pulpit oratory of the "crack" preacher who is obliged to pander to the sickly appetite of his audience by constant novelties of interpretation, and to lard his lean theology with spices of German spiritualism?

I do not say that the clergy (some of them at least) do not and cannot instruct us in the principles of natural morality which Christianity inculcates; but they do this no longer *authoritatively*—as Priests with a divine commission, but simply as men of culture, intelligence, and character; and if they be deficient in these secular accomplishments, however skilled they may be in professional lore, they are as wearisome and contemptible as the old "Mass Johns" of Popery in the sixteenth century. The pulpits of the Church are confessedly incapable of supplying the spiritual wants of the age from the legitimate fountains of orthodoxy, and consequently every form and variety of quackery is adopted to gratify the flagging appetite of "Evangelical" congregations. The popular preacher seizes on the topic of the hour with the rapidity of a speculator in Capel Court. The death of a statesman, or the sinking of a steamboat, makes the fortune of the Stowells, the Macneils, and the Cummings of the day.

But this state of things cannot last. Sacerdotalism, in every part of Europe, is being brought face to face with the needs and aspirations of humanity. In philosophical strictness, there are but two sects in the religious world—those who repose on authority and tradition, and those who acknowledge the claims of reason and conscience: and all attempts to mediate between them are based upon vicious logic, or dishonest sophistry. The great question that has been struggling for solution for three centuries, is, whether the Bible shall overrule the conscience, or

the conscience sit in judgment on the Bible? The evangelical Churchmen assert that the Bible reveals to us a perfect and positive rule of faith and morals, to which the conscience must submit. But the question immediately arises, "*Who shall interpret the Bible?*" If this power be claimed by the *Church*, in any sense (that is the motley Priesthood we have described), then it must, of course, assume *infallibility*, and a paramount *authority*, or it will be incompetent for its office—and this, disguise it as we will, is Popery. If it be asserted that the "private judgment" of earnest and sincere men will always assent to any given interpretation of scripture, and thus produce unity of doctrine—the *fact* is disproved by daily experience, and the existence of a hundred sects. It is mere bigotry to assert that all men who do not agree with ourselves in questions of school divinity, history, or criticism, have not honestly desired to find the truth in scripture. All thinking men desire religious knowledge, and are glad of any means (by external or internal revelation) by which it can be attained; but all thinking and honest men do not assuredly interpret the Bible alike, or believe equally in its supernatural pretensions, and its uniform authenticity and genuineness. The utter confusion of Protestant logic on this matter of the relative claims of the Bible and the conscience, is one of the greatest curiosities of modern polemics. We are sometimes told that the Bible approves itself to the enlightened conscience; but what is this but to assert that the conscience has already exercised the right of judging the Bible, as it would judge any other book?

I must again declare my profound conviction that the popular religion is becoming daily less acceptable to the educated and thoughtful portion of Christendom, and that it has actually ceased to have any real influence on the people. A reconsideration of the true basis of religious belief has become absolutely necessary. I protest against Lord Macaulay's doctrine,* that theology makes no progress even as a science, and that because Sir Thomas More, a man of genius and piety, with our New Testament in his hands, could accept the absurdity of "tran-

* See Review of Ranke's History of the Popes.

substantiation," and die for it, three centuries ago, men will always continue to act and reason thus, on the same premises. It is true indeed that man's soul will be for ever enveloped in mystery and wonder, but it by no means follows that the *same objects* will continue mysterious and wonderful to us. The "burning ploughshare" was once a cherished institution to the conservative wisdom of the Heptarchy. I believe that men have ceased, or will soon cease, to be the martyrs of opinions like these. But there is another question to be considered. Will men continue to allow the same authority to the *Scriptures* which they conceded in the sixteenth century, when "plenary inspiration" was an accepted doctrine of the Church and of the people? This doctrine of "inspiration" is now being tranquilly discussed by educated Christians as a question of philosophy; and even religious men are asking themselves, whether the "inspiration" of Paul and that of Luther differed in kind, or only in degree? Lord Macaulay reminds us that modern fanaticism is as wild and monstrous as in the darkest ages of the world, and this is true enough. But is it equally *diffused*? Are not the relative proportions of fanatics and rationalists widely different from what they were in the dark ages? He thinks Popery all but indestructible, because it has so often survived the assaults of revolted nations and insulted humanity, and he points to its vigorous revival immediately after the Reformation. But I believe there is a cure for Popery, and a very simple one. The cure for *Roman* Catholicism is a wider—a *human* Catholicity. She will perish when a more generous creed shall appeal to a deeper humanity.

Lord Macaulay concludes his "brilliant" essay in these words: "We by no means venture to deduce from these phenomena any *general law*, but we think it a most remarkable fact, that no Christian nation which did not adopt the principles of the Reformation before the end of the sixteenth century, should ever have adopted them. Catholic communities have since that time become *infidel*, and become *Catholic* again, but none has become *Protestant*." Now I think that Lord Macaulay *ought*, as a philosopher, to have deduced a "general law from

these phenomena." If whole nations freed from the trammels of Popery, fall into infidelity, and come back again, some of them to Popery (without accepting Protestantism at all), is it not clear that our make-believe Protestantism does not meet the religious wants of mankind? The fact is that our Protestantism is the mere negation its name bespeaks, and men prefer even a wrong principle to no principle at all—a positive to a negative creed. What Lord Macaulay probably means by "infidelity" is (amongst the higher and purer minds of every age) a passionate desire for a truer and more Catholic religious philosophy. The publication of the "Essays and Reviews" is an indication that men are really beginning to look with fresh eyes upon the vital principles of belief, and to turn once more from "theology" to nature. All honest, earnest, and cultivated men have substantially the same religious ideas, and it is only when these ideas are too sharply and rigidly defined in creeds and formulas, that the heresies and discords of polemics, and the crimes and follies of the Churches, come into existence. These "ideas" are the only "Catholic verities," and religion for its ultimate character depends on the simplicity and purity with which they are entertained. It is, I think, abundantly clear that the existing priesthood is utterly incompetent for the task of directing the present religious movement amongst the nations of the world. Let us trust that the Eternal Spirit, which has inspired us with new hopes and new desires for the spiritual development of humanity, will also, in good time, raise up amongst us a race of Seers and Evangelists able to entertain, and capable of expounding them.

THE END.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: August 2005

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township PA 16066
(724) 773-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 674 865 A

